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SHANNON M. BRANDT BRECHEISEN, 2014

THE SOPHOMORE RA EXPERIENCE: AN EXAMINATION OF JOB SATISFACTION, SELF-EFFICACY, AND TURNOVER INTENTIONS

Advisor: Dr. Matthew Wawrzynski

Abstract

The purpose of this national, quantitative study was to (1) provide psychometrics for the ACUHO-I/EBI RA Survey, a joint project between Educational Benchmarking, Inc (EBI) and The Association of College and University Housing Officers – International (ACUHO-I), and (2) explore the sophomore resident assistant (RA) experience. This study used a pre-existing, database compiled with the results of the ACUHO-I/EBI RA Survey distributed to residence life staff during the fall semester of 2004 and the spring semester of 2005. The sample included completed surveys from 1,443 sophomore RAs representing 61 institutions from the District of Columbia and 28 states.

While the RA Survey continues to be used extensively for benchmarking and assessment purposes at institutions nationally, no evidence of construct validity measures is readily available. This study examines the psychometrics, construct validity and reliability, of the RA Survey when administered to a sophomore RA sample. Analysis included inter-item correlations, confirmatory factor analysis, and Cronbach's Alpha reliability measure.

The results of this study provide researchers and administrators evidence of reliability, validity, and information about item characteristics for the RA Survey when used with sophomore RAs. The 10-factor structure is deemed appropriate for the sophomore RA sample based on acceptable values for RMSEA, CFI, TLI, WRMR, and factor loading and serves as evidence of construct validity. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients ranging from 0.84 to 0.95 indicated internal consistency for the 10-factors. Results also demonstrated incidences of multicollinearity. Implications highlight the need for practitioner expectation and usage of psychometric evidence prior to the utilization of assessment instruments.

Sophomore RAs exist at a point where the sophomore experience and the RA position intersect. Sophomore students contend with specific struggles and challenges unique to their class standing. Resident assistant positions are demanding, hardly an ideal environment for sophomore students already under stress. This study addressed the associations between specific factors attributed to the sophomore student (gender, expectations, and GPA), resident assistant position factors (role of the hall director, training, and work/life conditions) and outcomes (job satisfaction, turnover intention, and RA self-efficacy). Sophomore RA experience analysis included mean group differences via multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) for gender, academic performance, and turnover intention and correlations between expectations, role of the hall director, training, work/life conditions, job satisfaction, and RA self-efficacy.

Results found sophomore RAs satisfied with all aspects of their RA position, demonstrated acceptable to high academic performance, and are committed to their RA positions given most will return to their RA positions. The study offers a confirmed presence of sophomores hired in RA positions and a confirmed sophomore RA attrition rate (return to the RA position for a second year). The study also provides a sophomore RA experience factor relationship structure. Furthermore, the implications suggest that the RA position may serve as an unintentional Sophomore Year Experience (SYE) program for sophomores hired as RAs.



NATHAN J. CLASON, 2014

INVESTIGATING CHINESE MASTER'S STUDENTS EXPERIENCES WITH ACTIVE LEARNING METHODS AT A U.S. PUBLIC RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

Advisor: Dr. John Dirkx

Abstract

This study explored how students from China make sense of their experiences of active learning strategies in U.S. master's programs. There has been a significant increase over the past decade in the number of international students enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions. The influx of international students most recently has been led by a dramatic increase in the number of students from China. However, faculty perceptions of these students, reports of international student frustrations, and previous research on teaching and learning among students from China suggests that more research is needed to understand how these students make sense of their experiences in U.S. classrooms.

This qualitative study asked seven students from China enrolled in the Master of Business Administration, Master of Public Policy, and Master of Science in Environmental Engineering programs at a large research university to describe their experiences with the various teaching and learning strategies that they encountered in their programs. Phenomenological research methods were used to better understand the meaning that they attach to their experiences.

A distinctive finding was the combination of factors that seem to influence how these students develop preferences and expectations for particular teaching and learning methods. These students' educational cultures are influential in shaping how they make sense of their experiences in U.S. classrooms, but so are their expectations for the outcomes they associate with graduate level education and the effects of socialization within their master's programs. The findings also challenge many prevailing views about Chinese students. The conclusions that some professors draw from their observations of Chinese students may be incomplete or altogether inaccurate. The students in this study revealed that relationships with their professors and classmates – including domestic, Chinese, and international classmates – are important to managing the learning activities in their master's programs; they are self-directed in regards to learning activities based upon their backgrounds and interests; they acknowledge that culture is a factor in how they view their experiences in U.S. classrooms; they value teaching and learning strategies that focus on applying course content to realistic problems; and they regularly encounter barriers to participation related to English language, different ways of thinking, and domestic classmates who dominate small group and class discussions.



ROBERT N. COFFEY, JR., 2014

THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATION AGENTS ON STUDENT CHOICE MAKING IN THE CANADIAN POSTSECONDARY SEARCH PROCESS.

Advisor: Dr. Ann Austin

Abstract

Globalization has had an ongoing and significant impact on postsecondary education, with international student migration as one of the most visible markers. Education agents have emerged as middlemen in international student recruitment industry, mediating the admissions process on behalf of their institutional and student clients. The commission-based model within which most agents operate has prompted concern about whether agent profit and not student welfare drives decision-making in the search process. While agents have become ubiquitous in international admissions, little is known about their impact of their involvement on the outcome for their student clients.

The purpose of this study was to learn more about the role of student choice in the agent-mediated Canadian postsecondary search process. The setting of this study was eight postsecondary institutions in one Canadian province. A qualitative research methodology was used, and 23 currently enrolled international students were interviewed over the course of five months. The central research question was: What is the experience of international students involved in an agent-assisted Canadian postsecondary search process?

Study findings identified several push and pull factors (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) and key reference groups that catalyzed student interest in education abroad and influenced initial goal construction. Respondents readily identified both affordances and limitations that they associated with hiring an agent. Students typically hired agents to compensate for the time, knowledge, connections, and expertise they and their reference groups lacked. Commission-based agents primarily influence student choice-making by offering a severely constrained set of institutional and program choices. Migration-minded students were frequently willing to subordinate concerns about institutional fit, as any earned postsecondary qualification provides a glide path to permanent residency. Respondents frequently employed creative strategies to gather additional information that could be used to verify or expand upon what their agents told them. Nearly all respondents indicated satisfaction with the search outcome, although this was correlated with the degree of institutional or program undermatching or mismatching they had experienced.

The results of this study have implications for students, postsecondary institutions, and policymakers, which are presented. Limitations of this research include the setting (several postsecondary institutions in one Canadian province), the number of respondents (23), the qualitative approach, and the underrepresentation of undergraduate students in the study sample. Directions for future research include inquiry into the experiences of students who did not use agents; students who used agents but did not persist to graduation; and the experience of students who used agents to apply to Francophone postsecondary institutions in Canada.



SHEILA M. CORESSEL, 2014

THE INFLUENCE OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' INTENSITY OF INVOLVEMENT IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS ON LEADERSHIP VALUES.

Advisor: Dr. Marilyn Amey

Abstract

Previous research on college students' involvement in student organizations and the outcomes of that involvement supports the premise that involvement in student organizations while in college is beneficial for students in areas such as persistence to graduation, job placement, interpersonal skills, and leadership development (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Furthermore, Astin's (1984) Student Involvement theory states a college student's development as a result of involvement in a specific activity is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of effort dedicated to that activity. Most studies on involvement in student organizations focus on the involvement's influence on a range of outcomes, e.g., psychosocial development, academic persistence, and leadership development (Astin, 1993; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Foubert & Grainger, 2006), and the results reinforce Astin's (1984) Student Involvement theory. However, Astin (1984) also wondered if there is a limit to the benefits of this involvement. This study looks at this question as it relates to involvement in multiple organizations.

The purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between the intensity of involvement in student organizations and college students' leadership values. In other words, are there signs of diminishing returns as college students' intensity of involvement increases in regards to their leadership development? A student's intensity of involvement is the relationship between the student's quantity and quality of involvement in student organizations (Winston & Massaro, 1987). Data were collected through an instrument that combined the Extracurricular Involvement Inventory (EII; Winston & Massaro, 1987) and the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale, Revision 2 (NCLP, n.d.). The survey was administered electronically at the Great Lakes Affiliate of Colleges and Universities Residence Halls (GLACURH) annual regional conference in November 2013, held at Michigan State University. Attendees were college students involved in on-campus housing student organizations at institutions located in Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, or Ontario, Canada. A total of 204 students provided usable survey data for use in analyses.

Results from the data analysis using multiple regressions showed that there is a positive relationship between involvement in student organizations and students' leadership values. In addition, the results provided evidence of a tipping point in a college student's intensity of Involvement (EII) at which point an increase in leadership development is less likely to occur. When participants were divided between those involved in one organization (n=41) and those involved in multiple organizations (n=163), a tipping point in the EII was determined for participants involved in multiple organizations, but not for those involved in only one organization. Implications for student affairs practitioners and researchers and recommendations for future research is also discussed.



XIAO DAI, 2014

EXPLORING CHINESE FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF QUALITY STANDARDS IN ONLINE EDUCATION

Advisor: Dr. John Dirkx

Abstract

Online education has become a major component of higher education. With the rapid growth of online learning, stakeholders are concerned that higher education institutions might have increased access but lowered quality. Facing scrutiny and accountability demands, online education programs are often called to demonstrate quality. The challenge facing online education is how to widen access and reduce costs, while at the same time improving and ensuring quality.

In order to ensure quality, many organizations in the United States have developed standards and guidelines that detail the essential criteria for online programs to plan, evaluate, and improve quality. However, defining and implementing quality standards are complex issues. There are questions about the completeness of these quality standards. There are also unknowns of how much these quality standards, as developed by U.S. organizations, can be applied in educational settings other than the U.S.

This study explored how U.S. quality indicators for online education are perceived by Chinese faculty. Nine sources from the U.S. literature were identified to represent U.S. online education quality standards. Thirty-one quality indicators were assembled, and a survey was administered to 400 Chinese online faculty and their teaching assistants at a Chinese institution.

The results indicate that U.S. quality indicators for online education are perceived by Chinese faculty as relevant, with high ratings on the perceived importance of these indicators. Most respondents feel that this set of quality indicators reflects their criteria of quality; and that China should adopt them. The study also reveals, from the open-ended questions responses, that U.S. quality standards are not fully capturing the essence of quality for online education. Quality indicators, as reflected in the U.S. quality standards, focus more on the elements and conditions that are considered as inputs, but not enough on the outcomes. This suggests that even if the Chinese institutions replicate these indicators, the quality assurance process is not necessarily going to address the concerns that come out of the open-ended questions responses.

Because of the shortcomings and the incompleteness of these U.S. quality indicators, Chinese higher education institutions should be cautious in borrowing them. In order to successfully apply these U.S. indicators in China, Chinese scholars and institutions should expand and modify these U.S. quality indicators to suit the Chinese educational environment. This dissertation further discusses what expansion and modifications are needed, and how China may go about such modification. The dissertation concludes with the study's implications for quality assurance practices in China and for future studies of the quality of online education.



YING HUANG, 2014

IMPROVING ENGINEERING STUDENTS' NON-TECHNICAL PROFESSIONAL SKILLS AND ATTITUDES TO ENGINEERING THROUGH INQUIRY BASED LAB LEARNING

Advisor: Dr. James Fairweather

Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of inquiry-based instructional labs in improving engineering students' non-technical professional skills and attitudes to engineering by answering two sets of research questions: 1) Do inquiry-based labs enhance students' professional skills and attitudes towards engineering? 2) How does the complexity of learning tasks influence student learning outcomes in inquiry-based labs? This study adopted a multiple-case design to address research questions in naturalistic settings and a mixed-method approach with emphasis on the quantitative component. The final cases chosen included three lab courses offered at two large research universities in the Midwest: Engineering Design Lab, Chemistry Lab, and Bio-system Lab.

To address if students' professional skills and attitudes towards engineering changed after inquiry-based lab learning experience, individual level survey data were collected from students enrolled in the three sample courses, using the Inquiry-based Lab Learning Inventory (ILLI) developed for the current study. Additionally, I interviewed seven students who had taken the Engineering Design Lab within five years. Paired sample tests were conducted to test the null hypothesis that students' skills and attitudes to engineering did not change before and after the sample course. Then, estimates of effect sizes and confidence intervals were employed to measure the magnitude of change. The second research question was addressed through quantitative analysis of the survey data. Two survey items asked about students' perceived difficulty and workload of the course. Multivariate regression analysis and separate regression analyses were performed to examine the association between difficulty and workload of the course and student learning outcomes.

Across sample cases, students showed positive improvement in self-perceived skills in conducting lab work, attitude to teamwork and communication, and using active coping strategies when facing stress or difficulty in problem solving. The magnitude of change varied across sample cases. Students taking the Engineering Design Lab showed greatest improvement in these areas. Additionally, regression analyses results showed a positive association between perceived difficulty of the course and students' attitudes to teamwork and communication and coping strategies. However, the benefit of increased difficulty on these two learning outcomes started to decline after an upper middle difficult level. Therefore, excessive difficulty of a lab experiment of project could compromise the benefit of inquiry-based learning.

Findings about how inquiry-based instructional labs influence students' self-perceived skills in conducting cooperative inquiry-based projects and attitudes to engineering have several implications. 1) Inquiry-based lab instruction is a potentially powerful instructional method to develop students' attributes of engineering professionals. It can be utilized as a complement to enhance the current engineering curriculum to achieve a balance between cognitive and affective learning. 2) Engineering programs should engage students in inquiry-based lab work early on rather than only in upper division courses. 3) Faculty, staff, or teaching assistants who design, oversee, or facilitate instructional labs should be provided with teaching supports, so that they will have the capacity and confidence to engage students in inquiry-based lab work. 4) Facilitators of inquiry-based labs should check students' perceived difficulty of learning tasks periodically and adjust the complexity of learning tasks or provide scaffolding accordingly to achieve better learning outcomes.



KAREN L. KAHLER, 2014

ON BEATING THE ODDS: A STUDY OF SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

Advisor: Dr. Marilyn Amey

Abstract

With increasing numbers of underprepared students enrolling in community colleges, it becomes important to recognize what might contribute to their academic success. The purpose of this study was to explore what in the community college students' experience, especially those student facing risk factors, has contributed to their success. Much of the literature focuses on attrition and explores reasons for departure; but what about students who persist, especially those students who persist in spite of what we may predict about their success or what the students expect from themselves? This study explores successful adult learners, how they "beat the odds" and are excelling academically.

This study looked at students at one community college who arrive underprepared based on their incoming placement test and yet several semesters later, they have earned grade point averages of 3.50 or higher in their college level courses. The students completed a "Grit Inventory" (Duckworth, 2007), an alternative version of the Local Model of Student Success (Padilla, 2009) and discussed what knowledge, skills and abilities they used to overcome barriers they encountered. This study also explored how the constructs of motivation, expectancy, and mindset, impact underprepared community college students.



LEANNE M. PERRY, 2014

FACTORS INFLUENCING INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS

Advisor: Dr. Matthew Wawrzynski

Abstract

Research collaborations are an effective and necessary way to marshal resources and address complex, specialized problems. The U.S. federal government spends billions annually to fund research, much of which is directed toward research centers or teams (National Institutes of Health, 2012; National Science Foundation [NSF], 2014a). That level of investment, both by researchers and funders, demonstrates significant confidence that collaborations will be successful yet research suggests many collaborations can be frustrating with many groups underachieving or failing altogether (Kezar, 2005; Rhoten, 2004). This study used a qualitative, multiple case study approach to examine factors influencing combined STEM/social science interdisciplinary research collaborations. Fifteen members of three different research groups participated in two rounds of interviews at Bridgetown State University – a large, Midwestern research institution. Findings suggest there are institutional/external, group, and individual level inputs/antecedents to, and potential outcomes from, interdisciplinary collaborations. Emerging from this study is the Model of Factors Influencing Interdisciplinary Research Collaborations (MFIIRC). The study has theoretical and practical implications and has highlighted a number of areas for further investigation. Limitations of this research include a dearth of female principal investigators willing/available to participate in the study and a lack of racial/ethnic diversity among participants.



DAVINA POTTS, 2014

EXPLORING THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE EARLY CAREER VALUE OF STUDY ABROAD FOR BACHELOR DEGREE GRADUATES OF AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

Advisor: Dr. Ann Austin

Abstract

European and U.S. institutions have promoted the value of a study abroad experience for many years. As Australian higher education institutions have adopted policies and strategies to increase participation in education abroad, with employability as a central argument, it is important to study this claim. This dissertation examined the links between a study abroad experience and early career outcomes for recent graduates from Australian higher education, with a particular focus on the impact of the following factors: country of study, duration, program type and foreign language acquisition. While the study is set within the Australian higher education and graduate employment context, it contributes to the growing body of literature on the value of study abroad to participants, educational institutions, employers and society in general.

Becker's (1993) human capital theory and McMahon and Oketch's (2013) expanded concepts of the private and social benefits of higher education provide the conceptual framework for the study, informed by thinking on connections between higher education and the world of work (Brennon, Kogan & Teichler, 1996). A survey of alumni perceptions was based on the European Graduate Surveys (see Teichler, 2011; Teichler & Janson, 2007). Personal background, study and employment information provided important contextual frames through which the data were analyzed.

After working for an average of three years, respondents (N=226), the majority of whom had studied abroad for a semester or more, perceived that study abroad was relevant and beneficial to their early career experience. While respondents rated personal and developmental benefits more highly, important career-related benefits including career direction, securing their first job and long-term career prospects, were also identified. General international skills and knowledge as a benefit of study abroad outweighed country or region-specific knowledge or skills.

In terms of program parameters, respondents reported higher career benefits for studying abroad in another language, studying abroad multiple times, and undertaking study abroad as a compulsory component of a bachelor degree. This study revealed previously unexplored patterns of international experience prior to university, indicating that a small group of respondents had already developed significant international career capital (Inkson & Arthur, 2001) through multiple international experiences. This finding is of particular interest for policy discussions that prioritize career outcomes.

The findings of this paper have implications for policy and practice in the development of employability skills, the education of employers on the benefits of study abroad, access to study abroad, catering for students with diverse needs in terms of study abroad programs and career goals, and balancing specific geographic policy priorities against general participation goals. This study contributes to our understanding of study abroad outcomes for Australian students and highlights the need for further research in this area.



PAMELA ROY, 2014

DOMAINS OF INFLUENCE ON ACADEMICS' CAREERS: NARRATIVES FROM BLACK AFRICAN, COLOURED, AND INDIAN WOMEN ACADEMICS IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

Advisor: Dr. Ann Austin

Abstract

This research study examined a specific group of academics in South Africa who work in a nation that is striving for equity, inclusion and equality among its citizenship as it attempts to redress the legacies of colonial history and apartheid. I conducted an interview-based, phenomenological, interpretivist study to examine the narratives of 28 black women academics in post-apartheid South Africa concerning the factors that shape their lives and careers, and I analyzed how these perceived factors facilitated and/or inhibited their career development and lives. The detailed analyses of this study resulted in classifying black women academics' experiences in their careers with regard to four broad domains of influence: context, community, commitment and competence. The interactions and interrelationships between these domains of influence are complex, nuanced and dynamic as they influence the vibrant nature of these academics' lives and careers. In other words, each of the academics' careers was deeply embedded in her life, connected to her inner commitments and competencies, and influenced by the multiple contexts and communities to which she belonged.

Black women academics in post-apartheid South Africa do not define their career success solely by advancements in title and rank or by achieving so-called higher positions in the academy. Rather, the degree to which these academics viewed themselves as being successful in their careers and lives was based on their personal definitions of success and was a function of their efforts to balance these four domains that exert influence on their careers. Career success was not a facile definition; instead, it was complex and unique to the particularities of every woman's life. Success defined in such a way is gendered, and some would argue that it reflects feminist ways of thinking about success. Further, this study raises the question of whether the particularities of culture and national context influence the lives and careers of female academics in other countries whose institutions of higher education may or may not evaluate, reward, and incentivize academics for their advancements in title and rank.

Black women academics in post-apartheid South Africa are one example of how talented academics create and sustain successful and meaningful careers in ways that honor their work and personal lives. This has particular implications for how to create a workplace that accommodates personal and professional dimensions of the individual, providing the global academic community another way to think about career success in the academy. Not surprisingly, this notion of success reflects the spirit of uBuntu or as Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said, "I am what I am because of who we all are." In other words, this perspective defines success relationally and communally, recognizing that success both derives from the matrix of complex relationships in which we find ourselves at any given time and is the result of the contributions of many over the course of several years, and has a reciprocal obligation to that same matrix from which it was drawn. It sets the individual in the context of the community rather than apart from or, against it, as some competitive western models do.

The study also has specific implications for practice, including recommended action steps for academics, institutional leaders, policymakers and government officials in South Africa.



LESLIE JO SHELTON, 2014

THE EXPERIENCES OF UNDOCUMENTED LATIN STUDENTS WHO DEMONSTRATE RESILIENCE IN NAVIGATING HIGHER EDUCATION

Advisor: Dr. Ann Austin

Abstract

The status of undocumented students is a significant contemporary issue in postsecondary education, as the demographics of the United States are rapidly changing with a rising number of undocumented Latin@ students enrolling in postsecondary education. Although approximately 65,000 undocumented students graduate from U.S. high schools each year, these students' citizenship statuses serve as a barrier to the admission, financing, and completion of higher education (UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education, 2007). Little is known about the experiences of undocumented Latin@ college students and university educators will benefit from learning about the experiences of resilient undocumented Latin@ students to inform best practice for serving this student population.

In this study, I use Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) with a resilience framework to analyze data from semi-structured interviews with 16 undocumented Latin@ college students who are enrolled in or recently graduated from four-year institutions of higher education throughout the United States. Through the use of qualitative interviews, I explore how undocumented Latin@ college students demonstrate resilience while navigating higher education. The research question guiding this study is: How do undocumented Latin@ college students demonstrate resilience as they navigate higher education? I explore this main question through two sub questions:

1. How does being undocumented shape a student's college experience?
2. What factors help undocumented students overcome challenges encountered in higher education?

Participants reported that being undocumented shaped their experiences related to perception of campus climate, emotional challenges, academic and career limitations, and organizational involvement. Students demonstrated resilience through environmental factors such as relationships with family, peers, mentors, and other educational gatekeepers, as well as through maintaining ties to their home community, and through involvement in campus or community organizations. Students also demonstrated resilience through personal factors such as being future-oriented, effectively navigating the system, using effective coping behaviors, and embracing the connection between the personal and the political.

The discussion includes addressing themes related to CRT such as positionality, use of an anti-deficit approach, color-blindness, racist nativism, and interest convergence. Related themes of microaggressions, along with the importance of identity-based campus spaces, improving educator skills, and emphasizing an ethic of care are also explored. Implications for practice include raising awareness among educators and proactively showing support for this student group through visible ally programs, having positive interactions with students, serving as a resource, and helping to create networks of support for these students. Improving university resources includes practices such as creating formal peer and faculty/staff mentoring programs, dedicating physical campus spaces for a related student office with centralized resources, and enacting non-discrimination policies. Building connections external to postsecondary institutions includes involving the community, families, and K-12 partnerships in supporting undocumented students in achieving their higher education goals. The study concludes with a discussion of limitations and suggestions for future research.



JULIE SINCLAIR, 2014

AN INTEGRATED ORGANIZATIONAL VIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXPERIENCES IN GRADUATE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION: CASES OF DENTISTRY, LAW, AND MEDICINE AT A RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

Advisor: Dr. Marilyn Amey

Abstract

Internationalization of U.S. postsecondary institutions is a prominent topic in the current higher education environment. As part of internationalization efforts, universities and colleges are increasing study abroad or different types of international experiences that give students academic opportunities outside of the United States. The discussion of the importance of such experiences has been particularly prominent in undergraduate programs. However, literature indicates that providing international experiences to graduate students is of growing concern in the current global environment. Data indicate that majority of international experiences occur within graduate professional programs, including law, business, and the health professions. Additionally, literature on internationalization of U.S. higher education indicates that organizational factors within individual academic institutions matter in how international activities and strategies developed historically and are carried out in different ways. However, little is understood about how international experiences developed within graduate professional programs. Additionally, few research studies have used an organizational lens to understand development of such experiences.

The focus of the current study was to understand the factors involved in developing and implementing international experiences within graduate professional programs through an integrated organizational approach. This research project included three academic programs, dentistry, medicine, and law, at a doctoral-level research university that is part of a multi-campus system. Faculty and administrators in the three academic schools, as well as campus-level administrators, provided their views on how international experiences began and were sustained over time.

Key factors identified included faculty work and roles, various types of support, the role of curriculum, and connecting the international experiences in increasing ways across a variety of organizational levels. Additionally, the research data provided for a discussion of sustainability of international experiences in the three graduate professional programs. Future directions for research, policy, and practice are considered.



MELISSA SOTO, 2014

WOMEN OF COLOR FACULTY IN STEM: SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATING THE PROMOTION AND TENURE PROCESS

Advisor: Dr. Ann Austin

Abstract

Black women and Hispanic/Latina faculty are underrepresented in tenured science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) positions at research universities. Despite this fact, this demographic group is increasingly recognized at the national level as a key source of underutilized talent that may significantly contribute to the nations' STEM talent pool. As a result, resources continue to be allocated to higher education institutions to support the successful career advancement of women of color in STEM. Yet, little empirical data currently exists about how these faculty members successfully navigate the promotion and tenure process based on the salient challenges they face as probationary faculty.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that contribute to the successful career advancement of tenured Black women and Hispanic/Latina STEM faculty from assistant to associate professors at predominately White, research institutions. A sub-focus of this study is to identify the challenges faced by the participants during their early career.

This qualitative study is guided by social cognitive theory and the literature on faculty development. A purposeful snowball sampling technique (n=13) is utilized. Respondents filled out an online demographic questionnaire and participated in one round of telephone interviews (90-120 minutes). The findings show that the participants faced five key challenges as probationary, early career faculty. Seven personal and external strategies enabled the participants to mitigate these challenges and contributed to their successful promotion and tenure. Suggestions for future research and implications for policy and practice are presented.



PATRICIA LYNN STEWART, 2014

ONLINE COURSE DESIGN IN A PROGRAMMATIC FRAMEWORK: A CASE FROM SOCIAL WORK

Advisor: Dr. Steven Weiland

Abstract

The focus of this study centers on the way instructors, and more specifically, instructors within a programmatic initiative, think about teaching and the decision-making process they employ to design learning experiences for an online environment. Often administrative initiatives do not consider the unique individual instructor needs when planning for support and training. This study provides a perspective from the Grand Lakes University (GLU) School of Social Work and examines a group of eight online courses offered in the 2012 summer semester.

Instructor interviews and observations of the courses within the Learning Management System (LMS) provide data that informs how course design decisions can impact teaching and learning factors, as well as the role that administrative support and expectations play in overall course efficacy. Course design is most often framed within the context of the field of instructional design. This study also provides a brief history of the field and describes the basic constructs that help structure understanding of the many aspects of course design that faculty face when teaching online.



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BEING AND BELONGING: A CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF UNDERGRADUATE CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' SENSE OF BELONGING IN RESIDENCE HALLS

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Abstract

Despite the large number of international students from China in U.S. higher education, little research exists on these students' perceptions of the racial climate in residence halls. This research study illuminates the experiences affecting the sense of belonging of first-year Chinese international students and provides insights on how these students perceive the climate within their new collegiate 'home'. I used a phenomenological orientation to understand participants' lived experiences. A critical lens was used to analyze and examine the contextual influences on the participants' experiences.

This study is centered on understanding how undergraduate Chinese international students' experiences with domestic students affected the Chinese students' understanding of their sense of belonging in their residential communities. The study participants' perceptions of barriers to their sense of belonging are addressed in this study. In addition, the participants' perceptions of racial climate in residence halls are investigated. All of these factors illuminate the Chinese international participants' sense of belonging in their residence halls. This study is guided by Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen's (1999) framework for understanding the elements affecting campus climate for racial/ethnic diversity, with an emphasis on how these elements interact to affect student's sense of belonging, or perceived affiliation and connectedness, to their residence halls at Michigan State University.

The study's findings provided insights on the challenges that Chinese international students faced when navigating a foreign environment. Cultural differences and language barriers were the most salient issues affecting Chinese students' sense of belonging in the residence halls. The participants' lived experiences emphasized the importance of social interactions between Chinese students and their domestic peers. Language played a role in the intergroup interactions, specifically either a bridge or a barrier to Chinese students' connections to domestic students. Roommate and floormate relationships were also explored, with an examination of how these relationships as either served as a cultural bridge or led to discomfort in the residence halls. Overall, cultural tensions and language barriers emerged as important factors in Chinese students' sense of belonging.

In addition to interpersonal relationships, participants provided insights on their cognitive evaluations of their interactions with other students. Participants' perceptions of their outsider status on campus were highlighted, including these students' perception of language ability, feelings of discrimination and isolation, and awareness of being an outsider. The student participants recognized that as international students, they were considered foreign outsiders by domestic students, which affected their ability to "fit in" with American students. Again, language was an issue that affected all aspects of participants' experiences, including any perceived hostility from domestic students. The participants' sense of belonging was negatively impacted by incidents of discrimination and feelings of being an outsider.

I conclude by offering suggestions for practice, policy, and future research on undergraduate Chinese international students. The implications from this study indicated a critical need for university staff to examine campus culture and climate in order to facilitate academic and social success for Chinese international students.